

Message Text

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SUBJ: HEADS OF DELEGATIONS TO MARCH 4-5 LABOR MINISTERS MEETING

REF: OECD PARIS 05058

1. AS REQUESTED REFTTEL, THE EMBASSY PROVIDES THE FOLLOWING BRIEF BIOSKETCHES OF SWISS FEDERAL COUNCILOR ERNST BRUGGER AND AMBASSADOR ALBERT GRUEBEL.

2. PRIOR TO HIS ELECTION TO THE FEDERAL COUNCIL (SWITZERLAND'S NATIONAL EXECUTIVE) IN 1970, COUNCILOR BRUGGER, 61, HAD HAD NO PREVIOUS GOVERNMENTAL EXPERIENCE AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL. FOLLOWING A TEN-YEAR CAREER AS A SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER, HE WAS ELECTED TO THE ZURICH CANTONAL LEGISLATURE IN 1947 AND FOR THE NEXT TWENTY-THREE YEARS WAS ACTIVE IN CANTONAL AND MUNICIPAL POLITICS. AS A FEDERAL COUNCILOR, BRUGGER IS HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ECONOMY AND HAS PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR AGRICULTURE AND FOR DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN ECONOMIC POLICY, AS WELL AS FOR LABOR MATTERS. HE HAS BEEN A STRONG ADVOCATE OF INCREASED SWISS PARTICIPATION IN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS AND IS WELL DISPOSED TOWARD THE US.

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DURING HIS TENURE AS PRESIDENT OF THE CONFEDERATION

IN 1974, HE WAS VERY ACTIVE IN PROMOTING SWISS MEMBERSHIP IN THE INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AGENCY. BRUGGER IS OFTEN DESCRIBED AS A WARM AND GENEROUS MAN MORE INTERESTED IN PEOPLE THAN INTELLECTUAL CONCEPTS. HE IS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE HUMAN ASPECTS OF THE FOREIGN WORKER PROBLEM. HE SPEAKS ENGLISH, FRENCH, AND GERMAN.

2. FOR FIVE YEARS PRIOR TO HIS 1974 APPOINTMENT AS SWISS AMBASSADOR TO THE OECD, AMBASSADOR GRUEBEL, 58, WAS DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF INDUSTRY, CRAFTS AND LABOR WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ECONOMY. IN THIS CAPACITY, HE WAS THE SENIOR GOS OFFICIAL DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR LABOR MATTERS. THE AMBASSADOR RECEIVED A DOCTOR OF LAWS DEGREE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF BASEL IN 1940 AND ENTERED GOVERNMENT SERVICE IN 1942 WITH THE OFFICE FOR WAR, INDUSTRY AND LABOR. HE HAS HELD SEVERAL FOREIGN TRADE POLICY POSITIONS IN THE DIVISION OF COMMERCE (ALSO PART OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ECONOMY), AND FROM 1951 TO 1967 HE WAS SECRETARY OF THE BOARD OF THE SWISS TRADE AND INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION (VORORT), WHICH IS ROUGHLY COMPARABLE TO THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MANUFACTURERS IN THE US. AMBASSADOR GRUEBEL HAS A RESERVED PERSONALITY AND CAN BE DIFFICULT TO DRAW OUT IN CONVERSATION. HE SPEAKS ENGLISH, GERMAN, AND FRENCH.
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